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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU/RUSSIA: SLOUCHING TOWARD THE SUMMIT

Classified By: POLCOUNS ANDREW J. SCHOFER FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: According to the Dutch EU Presidency, the October 19 EU-Russia troika made only limited progress toward finalizing agreements in the four "common spaces" preparation for the November 11 EU-Russia summit. Outstanding differences remain in the areas of external security (where the Russians reportedly do not want to engage on the basis of the EU's "common neighborhood" policy with regard to the states of the former Soviet Union) and freedom, security, and justice (where Russian proposals to promote counter-terrorism cooperation have raised human rights and civil liberties concerns on the EU side.) Although the EU insists that the four agreements should only be announced as a package, both sides have agreed to be flexible in implementing specific proposals if the package is not completed by the summit. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). (C) Tony van der Togt, Director of the Dutch MFA's Office of Eastern and Central European Affairs, told POLCOUNS on October 20 that the EU-Russia Ministerial Troika on October 19 in The Hague made only limited progress toward finalizing preparations for the November 11 EU-Russia summit. Van der Togt noted that the "slow pace" of discussions made it unlikely that the EU and Russia would conclude agreements with regard to the "four common spaces" put on the agenda last year in St. Petersburg. He stressed that the EU would continue to insist that all four agreements (which he characterized as "political declarations" or "roadmaps") should be treated as a single package and announced simultaneously.

[13](#). (C) Of the four "common spaces," van der Togt said that work in the common economic space (including trade, investment, telecommunications, transport, energy, and environment issues) and the "research, education, and culture" spaces had progressed the farthest. Van der Togt noted that Prime Minister Fradkov's visit to The Hague on September 29 had helped smooth the way for the EU to offer Russia "most favored nation" status. Russia's decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, he added, also removed an obstacle to improved economic relations. Van der Togt noted that Russia had earlier tried to de-link environmental issues from the economic dialogue, but now understood that the EU could not engage fully unless its concerns in this area were taken seriously. On the research/education/culture space, Van der Togt said that the only remaining questions to discuss fall into the category of "who pays for what" and would likely be resolved soon. Van der Togt saw no major obstacles in principle to concluding roadmaps in both areas by the summit, although he reiterated any such agreements would not be announced until the full package was ready.

[14](#). (C) With regard to the "freedom, security, and justice" common space, van der Togt said that several "sticky questions" remained with regard to the appropriate role of human rights and rule of law discussions. He added that the Russians had pushed hard to strengthen anti-terrorism cooperation, but had quickly run up against European civil liberties concerns by demanding the extradition of high-profile Chechen asylum seekers and restricting their access to the media. (Note: Van den Togt said that the EU deliberately chose not to raise Chechnya as a separate issue during the discussions, although he expected it would come up during the summit.) Van den Togt said that there would be an experts-level meeting in Brussels to consider Russian proposals in this area, followed by a ministerial JHA meeting in Luxembourg next Tuesday. The EU also plans to send EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator Gijs de Vries to Moscow in early November (prior to the summit) to explore possible areas of cooperation, which might be reflected in a joint summit statement. Van der Togt was skeptical, however, that a roadmap for this space would be completed in time for the summit.

[15](#). (C) Van der Togt was even less optimistic about concluding a roadmap with regard to the final common space, "external security." Van der Togt said that the Russian delegation did not want to engage on the basis of the EU's "common neighborhood" policy focusing on the states of the former Soviet Union. According to van der Togt, the Russians increasingly view EU interest in this area as unwelcome interference in Russia's sphere of influence. The Russian side also dismissed OSCE involvement the former Soviet space as lopsided and biased against Russian. (Note: Van den Togt noted that this message appeared inconsistent with the

approach of the Russian mission to the OSCE, but stressed that Lavrov was quite blunt in expressing his views.) Although the EU side suggested updating mechanisms for addressing issues of common concern in Moldova and the Caucasus, van den Togt felt that the Russian side showed little interest in modifying processes that currently favor Russian interests. The Russian side was also unrealistic, he said, in seeking a "visa free regime" with the EU by 2008 and pushing hard for EU concessions on Kaliningrad transit arrangements.

16. (C) Despite the lack of substantial progress in some areas, van der Togt described the talks as "businesslike" and cordial. There was no evidence of any remaining bad blood over FM Bot's earlier remarks about the Beslan tragedy, he added. Both sides agreed that while the roadmaps would only move forward as a "package," they would exercise flexibility with regard to implementing specific positive steps if appropriate. In any event, van der Togt said, the "roadmaps" would only cover the period from now until 2007 because the current EU-Russia association agreement expires in 2008 and will need to be renegotiated.

SOBEL